

# The Hand as an Index in Character Reading Proves More Trustworthy Than the Face

Contour and Lines of Palm, Fingers and Thumb Reveal Traits and Emotions Often Disguised in Facial Expression

By ALON BEMENT.

THE study of hands is one of the most interesting and instructive of pastimes, for next to the face the hand is the best index of our character, and under certain circumstances is even more to be depended upon for the true expression of it. The face can be made to mask the real feelings and therefore to conceal character, for the facial muscles act at the dictates of the will and are trained in the art of concealment. This is not so true of the hands. They are more apt to express by posture and gesture the emotion with no feeling of restraint, and by their contour portray to the intelligent observer the character and habits and even go so far as to indicate their ancestry.

I can think of a dozen hands at this

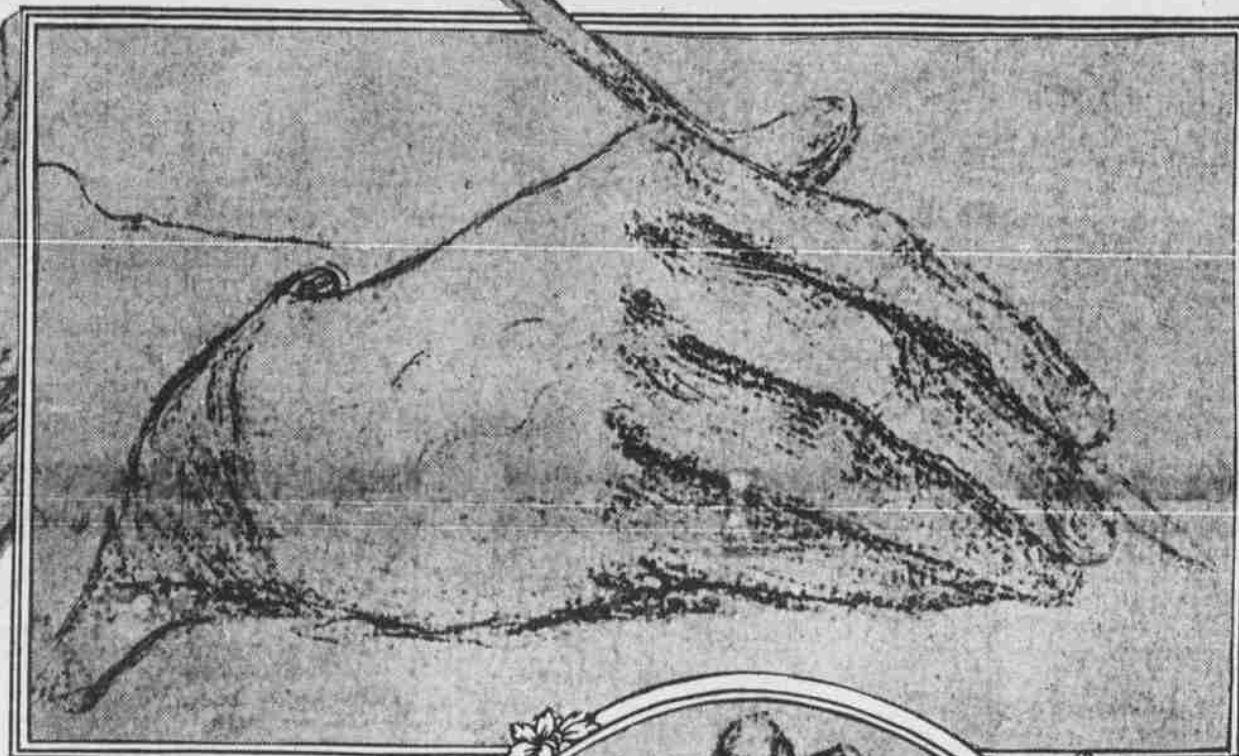
broken down lines at the corners and is thin through the heel then your constitution is not all that is to be desired.

If the thumb is short and has the habit of sticking close to the first finger you are easily influenced, but if it is long and hangs out almost at right angles to the palm you are self-willed, stubborn and hard to influence. A long thumb with a heavy second joint that remains about half way between these two positions denotes a strong, aggressive character with a well disciplined will. In the last case you have determination with a mind ready to act reasonably.

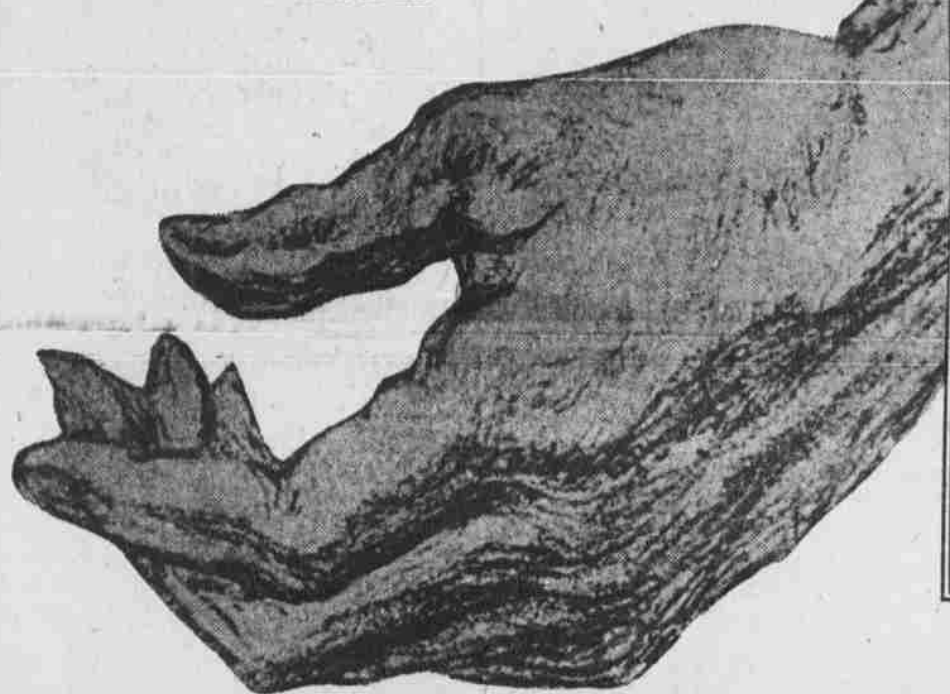
If your fingers are short compared with the palm you are unimaginative, but you are probably a good hard worker. If the fingers are of very equal length, rather



JOHN BARRYMORE.



WOODROW WILSON.



GEN. LEONARD WOOD

moment, each one expressing the dominant characteristic of its owner. Thus one hand has a kind look about it, as if it were eager to do you a service. Another is painfully shy and timorous. Another is not beautiful in outline but strong and clean, with a big, generous look about the knuckles and fine, well shaped nails.

Some hands always look apologetic. Some are grasping. Some are so aggressive that they almost shout. Then there is the reticent, quiet hand with close fingers and long, narrow nails.

We all know the nervous hand, the futile hand, limp and lank, the square, short fingered, pugnacious hand, the "careful" hand, which moves slowly and with thought, while the faces of these people are commonplace.

## Study Hands for Yourself.

Study hands for yourself, and after a while you will learn as I have to trust them rather than faces. And then, too, it seems to me more easy to remember hands. Faces have a way of eluding visualization, but hands, if you notice them at all, seem to fix themselves quite immovably in the memory. Think a moment of your mother's hands. Capable and kind looking, weren't they? The fingers fall easily into a protective curve. And you mostly remember them busy at something, but willing to stop and hold themselves out to you—and there were needle pricks on the left forefinger. Don't her hands come before you just as vividly as her face or figure? More so perhaps.

The study of hands is a hobby that can be indulged in at all times and in all places, for, failing the hands of others to observe, it is quite possible to analyze your own, both with pleasure and profit, for it presents an opportunity of making studies concerning your own shortcomings and consequently opens a road for the planning of their correction. Examine your own with care and see what you find when you look at it with an unbiased eye.

Is it the kind of hand that should belong to you—that is, the kind that should belong to the you you consider yourself to be—is the palm long, deep at the base of the thumb (when you look at it sideways) and rather square at the corners? Then you have a basis of good physical stamina to begin on. If it has rather

blunt, and start in a straight line at the palm you are very likely to be a skillful worker at anything you do with your hands. The most skillful people are supposed to have rather wide tip fingers of more or less equal length. If your fingers are very long compared with the palm you are of an imaginative, intellectual temperament, and if they of rather unequal length the chances are that you are

of a nervous temperament, but you belong to the great army of people who build: the artist, the architects and literary folks and the engineers.

If you have the same proportion of



CHRISTY MATHEWSON

The second is the constructive type. It has a practical palm, not unlike that of the executive, though the hollow in the centre will be deeper and the fingers always longer and more uneven in their length and contour. To this type of hand belong all the arts and many of the sciences. It includes professional men and even politicians. Each individual will have the large strong palm and the long fingers, but each with its own difference marked by slight variations from type.

The one with the comparatively short fingers, lacking slightly the imagination of the other but making up perhaps by the driving power of a longer palm that carries him to the completion of a task when the other more imaginative person would fail. In this class appear usually, though not always, the great technicians of the world.

## The Sign of Genius.

Then the characteristics of the class will be repeated, but the fingers will be of more uniform length and have broad tips. It is rare that the greatest artist is at the same time the greatest technician, but when this combination does appear you have the genius, for you have the greatest manipulative skill combined with the imaginative constructive temperament.

Of the drawings perhaps Mr. Barrymore and Mr. Edison come nearest to being this type, though Mr. Barrymore is at variance with it, leaning toward the artistic type with unequal length of fingers and Mr. Edison toward the thin palm, big jointed but thin fingered hand that represents what we may call the philosophical or third type.

When I went to Gen. Wood's headquarters, thinking that a letter from my publishers explaining the reason for my visit had preceded me, I found him hard at work at his desk. The letter of introduction had gone astray, and I came up against a mind not only unprepared for the request that I be given time to get a drawing of his hand but constitutionally opposed to any publicity of that particular sort. He saw no reason why his hand should be drawn, thought it mere sensational stuff anyway, and though I explained that only the hands of distinguished Americans were being done for the article he flatly refused at first. During this perhaps ten minutes conversation I had been observing his left hand, which he held in rather a curious attitude, drooping over his right arm.

Suddenly becoming conscious of my scrutiny he put both hands behind him in a self conscious, shy manner thoroughly compatible with his character. Finding me still persistent he was finally won over to a more serious consideration of my project and promised to give me time in which to do the drawing properly if I would come back three days later. My own business prevented this, and I was forced to come away without any drawing at all but with a very strong impression

of the man's personality and carrying a fairly clear idea of the man's hand in my mind, from which I deduced the accompanying sketch.

When I went to Gen. Wood's headquarters the impression I received of the man was that of absolute fearlessness, capable, with extreme sensitivity, a kind of sensitiveness that amounted almost to shyness. He arose and greeted me with a clear and sharp scrutiny. He showed a genial and courteous desire to do the friendly thing. Yet he was outspoken in his condemnation of anything that might amount to sensationalism.

## Objected to Drawing.

He objected with absolute frankness at the beginning to any drawing of his hand being made, but he was ready to see the matter from my point of view and was ready to postpone the interview to a later period when he had more time. I came away from the interview disappointed, because we had wasted ten minutes, five of which would have given me a fairly convincing sketch; but my admiration for the directness of the man and the skill and clearness of mind that he exhibited in dealing with a proposition of which he had no former information aroused my interest and compelled my respect.

My interest in Mr. Barrymore's hand is very genuine. It is a remarkable hand in many respects. It is a typical hand of an artist. A big, strong palm, deep from the heel to the fingers, wide enough for power, thick enough for vitality. The fingers were long and strong and intellectual. They were thick enough to demonstrate will power and flexible enough to have adaptability. He has the powerful hand of outdoor men, with the bone and muscle of an athlete, but no athlete can boast of the proportion and fineness of the Barrymore hand.

It is the type of hand that all painters, architects, inventors and engineers have. But it has more in it, because it is not only a constructive hand. It is a spiritual hand, as well as a sympathetic, bold and daring one. The making of this drawing brought out a very interesting fact. It had been my purpose to get a drawing that would show his hand in the posture that he takes in the first act of the play "Redemption," the hand of the dilettante just beginning his downward path; there is something disagreeable in the way Mr. Barrymore drapes his hands over the back of the couch while he listens to the Russian singers.

It is almost objectionable in its foppishness and the degenerate's quality that marks the first stage of this strange character's life. When I went to do the sketch in Mr. Barrymore's dressing room after the play it was this posture in the first act that I wished to do. After many attempts to get it we were finally forced to

(Continued on Third page.)